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## COMMERCIAL STATISTICS.

Criticism of commercial statistics is again illustrated in the following letter recently published in the *London Economist*:

SIR,—With the growing competition with Germany our Board of Trade returns are more keenly scrutinized, and conclusions as to our trade with that country are drawn from it by our economists and statesmen. Unfortunately it is evident that these returns are misleading. Our imports from Germany last year are stated to amount to £27,567,000, while Holland is credited with having sent us £29,275,000 of goods, although the latter is not a manufacturing country. On the other hand, it is evident that the industrial western and southern portions of Germany take the natural trade route along the banks of the Rhine through Dutch ports for this country. Holland is therefore credited with undoubtedly an enormous share of trade which actually belongs to Germany. As a proof that such is the case, take the item of wine. Holland, although not a wine-producing country, is credited to have sent us during 1896 of that commodity to the value of £348,718, while Germany, whose hocks are extensively consumed in this country, only figures with £56,386. It is apparent that all the wine credited to Holland came really from Germany. Take another item. Silk broad-stuffs are supposed to have been imported from Holland last year to the extent of £1,625,074, while all the other countries are only reported to have sent us of such goods to the amount of £394,000. Now Crefeld, the great seat of the German silk industry, lies hard on the borders of Holland, and there is no reason to doubt that the bulk of the silk goods supposed to have been imported from Holland really came from Germany. I have not sufficient particulars to extend this inquiry, nor am I in a position to state to what an extent our reported exports of £8,350,000 to Holland may be actually intended for Germany, Switzerland, and Northern Italy. This, however, seems certain, that our Board of Trade returns are not up to the requirements of the present time, and, having regard to the importance of full and reliable information in regard to the flow and drift of our trade, I hope you will use your great influence to have this subject more fully ventilated.

Yours respectfully, MAX. L. SAMUEL.

London, February 23, 1897.

The same subject is touched upon by M. Yves Guyot in the *Journal des Economistes*. The matter is summarized in the *London Economist* of January 23, 1897, as follows:—

M. Yves Guyot contributes to the *Journal des Economistes* an interesting study on Comparative International Trade. It need scarcely be said that the writer is one of the few Free-traders remaining in

France. He devotes a part of his paper to a refutation of Mr. Williams' volume, "Made in Germany," and of a similar work by M. Schwob, published in France under the title of "Danger Allemand," with the view of showing that France has suffered a "Commercial Sedan." For the comparative tables contained in his article, M. Yves Guyot has gone to the best available authorities, namely, the official returns issued in the different countries; but some remarkable discrepancies may be observed between the returns of each country when compared with those of the others. The years referred to are not stated, but it may be taken for granted that they were the most recent at the time the paper was written, that is to say, 1895. For example, the English returns of imports from Germany are set down at a value of £26,900,000, while the German returns of the exports to England are given at £33,750,000. The English returns of exports to Germany are stated at £32,700,000, while the German returns acknowledge only a value of £26,815,000 of imports from England. Usually the estimates of the values of merchandise are higher in the importing country than in the exporting one, as freight and insurance have to be added to the cost; but in the case of England and Germany the same merchandise is returned at nearly 20 per cent less when imported than when previously exported. In the trade between England and other leading countries similar differences in the amounts are exhibited, but in the returns for France and the United States the balance is the other way, and may be explained, but in a measure only, by the freight and insurance. Thus the English returns estimate the imports from France at £47,470,583, and the exports to France at £20,324,908, while the French returns show exports to England amounting to only £40,096,000, and imports from England to £19,856,000. In the trade of England with the United States, English returns give £86,548,860 of imports from the United States, and £44,067,703 of exports. The American returns show £76,820,000 of exports to England, and £31,820,000 only of imports from England. Evidently conclusions on the balance of trade between two countries drawn from official statistics must be received with more than a grain of salt, as they depend on the returns of the country chosen for the factors of the comparison.

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#### UNITED STATES CIVIL SERVICE.

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A compilation of statistics has been made by the United States Civil Service Commission showing the number of positions in both the classified and the unclassified parts of the Executive civil service on June 30, 1896, and showing in detail the number of employees in each of the several departments, offices, and commissions. The following is a summary of the statistics for the Executive branch:—